IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for producing a feed material for molten metal production, the method comprising:

heating a mixture containing a metal oxide-containing material and biomass to carbonize the biomass in the mixture in a heating furnace, wherein the heating furnace is substantially isolated from oxygen; and

obtaining the feed material comprising a mixture containing a carbide of the biomass ~~carbide~~ and the metal oxide containing material, wherein the metal oxide containing material comprises metal oxide and optionally, the metal thereof in reduced form.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A method for producing a feed material for molten metal production, the method comprising the steps of:

heating a mixture containing a metal oxide-containing material and biomass to carbonize the biomass in the mixture in a heating furnace, wherein the heating furnace is substantially isolated from oxygen;

charging the mixture in a reducing furnace;

reducing the metal oxide-containing material contained in the mixture in the reducing furnace; and

obtaining the feed material comprising a mixture containing a carbide of the biomass ~~carbide~~ and the metal oxide containing material wherein the metal oxide containing material comprises metal oxide, partially or entirely reduced to a reduced metal.

Claim 3 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, wherein the atmospheric temperature in the reducing furnace is 1250° C to 1450° C.

Claim 4 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, further comprising a step of agglomerating the mixture between the step of carbonizing the biomass contained in the mixture and the step of charging the mixture in the reducing furnace.

Claim 5 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, further comprising a step of melting the mixture by heating in the reducing furnace after the step of reducing the metal oxide-containing material contained in the mixture in the reducing furnace.

Claim 6 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 1, wherein the heating temperature in the heating furnace is 700° C or more.

Claim 7 (Original): A method for producing a molten metal, comprising the steps of:

charging a feed material for molten metal production obtained by the method according to claim 1 in a melting furnace; and

melting the feed material in the melting furnace.

Claim 8 (Original): The method for producing a molten metal according to claim 7, further comprising a step of agglomerating the feed material for molten metal production before the step of charging the feed material in the melting furnace.

Claim 9 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 1, wherein the biomass is wood biomass.

Claim 10 (Original): The method for producing a molten metal according to claim 7, wherein the biomass is wood biomass.

Claim 11 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, wherein the heating temperature in the heating furnace is 700° C or more.

Claim 12 (Original): A method for producing a molten metal, comprising the steps of:

charging a feed material for molten metal production obtained by the method according to claim 2 in a melting furnace; and

melting the feed material in the melting furnace.

Claim 13 (Original): The method for producing a molten metal according to claim 12, further comprising a step of agglomerating the feed material for molten metal production before the step of charging the feed material in the melting furnace.

Claim 14 (Original): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, wherein the biomass is wood biomass.

Claim 15 (New): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 1, wherein the metal oxide-containing material is an iron oxide-containing material.

Claim 16 (New): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 15, wherein the iron oxide-containing material includes zinc oxide.

Claim 17 (New): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 2, wherein the metal oxide-containing material is an iron oxide-containing material.

Claim 18 (New): The method for producing a feed material for molten metal production according to claim 17, wherein the iron oxide-containing material includes zinc oxide.